



U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OVERLAND PARK, KANSAS, MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO 18 COUNTS OF MAIL FRAUD

TOPEKA, Kan. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced that **Richard M. Hassur**, 71, Overland Park, Kansas, entered a guilty plea today before U.S. District Judge **Julie A. Robinson** to **eighteen counts of mail fraud and agreed to pay \$197,524.70 in restitution.**

Melgren said that Hassur admitted at his plea that he was the owner, president and sole shareholder of Agri-Ventures Inc. (AGRI), located at 2420 Huxman, Cairo, Kansas. AGRI sold memberships to farmers for \$3,500 which allowed farmers to purchase a variety of products and supplies from AGRI at a better price than the farmers could obtain locally. Hassur admitted that beginning in 1993 he took money for himself from AGRI. Hassur further admitted that in 1994 he took approximately \$481,838 and in 1995 he took approximately \$503,488 from AGRI which was listed as "Loans to (stock) shareholders" in AGRI's Corporate Annual Reports. Hassur further admitted that he was the only shareholder of AGRI. Hassur further admitted that by September 1996, AGRI was struggling and was unable to obtain products from suppliers because the suppliers had not been paid. Hassur admitted that AGRI sales personnel continued to sell memberships to farmers and made false representations about the products AGRI could provide. Hassur admitted that for the purpose of executing this scheme to defraud, he caused various correspondence to be sent and delivered by the U.S. Postal Service.

Hassur faces a maximum of thirty years in federal prison without parole. Sentencing is set for February 17, 2004, at 9:00 a.m.

Melgren commended the excellent work of the FBI and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in this investigation and Assistant U.S. Attorney Greg Hough in this prosecution.